

Time Paradox Reissued

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Summary: A pair of strangers invade Fowl Manor. One of them seems to know Butler. The other seems to be of an old species, straight from the legends. The younger Artemis is determined to figure out who these people are and why they have come. Unfortunately, there is another mastermind orchestrating the affair, and time is running out...

1. Chapter 1

When Holly and Artemis the elder emerged from the time tunnel, they did not anticipate dropping in right next to Butler. When the hulking manservant trained his sight on the pair of friends, Holly instinctively jumped into action. She blasted the Mud Man with the _mesmer. _

"Sleep," she commanded, her voice irresistable.

Unfortunately, _mesmer _was most effective on those weak of mind. Butler was not so empty-headed as most members of his species. In short, he did not find Holly's voice so irresistable.

* * *

><p>A disturbing notion materialized in Butler's sluggish mind.
She's hypnotizing me!

He drew the hypodermic dart gun with lead fingers. "_You_ sleep," he mumbled, then shot the girl in the hip.

"Not again," she moaned, collapsing to the floor.

Butler's head cleared. He wasn't sure what the girl meant by _not again. _Evidently this was not the first time she had been through an ordeal. The girl's partner did not so much as blink.

She is the expert of the two, thought Butler brusquely, climbing to his feet. Before he could wonder what the man's worth was, he spoke.

"Domovoi," the man said. "Listen to me."

Butler's heart stopped. _Domovoi_. It had been years since he'd heard that name last.

"Who are you?" Butler said. He trained the tranquilizer on the man's thigh. Butler's head was buzzing. How could anyone possibly find his name? There were only three people alive in the world who knew his full name. Three people and this disheveled young man. Not even the CIA had that information. Not even Artemis Fowl.

The trespasser stepped from the shadows, training a pair of mismatched eyes onto Butler's face. One blue eye, one brown. Just like the girl's eyes. His hands were upturned and empty. "Trust me," he said. "I'm an old friend."

Butler was torn. Part of him was tempted to let this young man speak. The intruder looked strangely familiar, though Butler couldn't quite place him.

But the other side, the professional, knew the risks that accompanied letting one's guard down. He had been easily hypnotized. Perhaps this man had found out Butler's name while the kibosh had been on his higher mental faculties. Ultimately his service was to Artemis Fowl. This intruder was a threat to his principal. Therefore, the threat had to be removed. Or at least terminated.

"I don't have friends," Butler said. He shot the man in the shoulder.

The young man sank to the floor with a look of horror, as if Butler had once been his only companion. His voice was full of pain. Genuine pain. "Butler, you shot me."

And as the strange man's mismatched eyes lost their focus, Butler realized why he looked so familiar.

The man looked like Artemis Senior from many years ago.

Master Artemis would find out about this, no doubt. Butler's main concern was for the efficacy of their relationship. If principal and protector grew too close, it could undermine their roles as partners. Cloud judgement. Part of the deal between the Fowls and Butlers was the secrecy of the bodyguards' first names. It helped keep professionalism intact.

Butler would tell Artemis the truth, as the contract entailed. One, these people had broken into Fowl Manor, which obviously made them a threat in the short-term. Two, the man had knowledge that no one was supposed to have. Three, if Master Artemis pursued the knowledge the man had, that the contract with Butler would immediately be dissolved. That would bring an end to centuries of uninterrupted service between their families.

The Fowl heir was not one for tradition, but perhaps he would make an exception.

* * *

><p>"Fascinating," Artemis said, combing over the comatose bodies in the brightly-lit laboratory. They were lying side by side on stainless steel tables.<p>

"That young man knows my first name," said Butler abruptly, hoping the young genius would understand the implications that came with that particular sentiment.

"Really," said Artemis, not looking up. "An old associate, perhaps?"

"I don't recognize him," Butler admitted. "Or the girl."

"I wonder how they broke in."

"Me too. Nothing on any of the motion sensors."

"Interesting. They had been wearing clothes from the Fowl wardrobe, and you could not locate their clothes. So they bypassed security in their underwear."

"So it would seem."

"The girl is fascinating. She's less than a meter tall, but she has adult body proportions. And look," said Artemis, brushing aside a lock of red hair. "She has pointed ears."

Butler was surprised. The wig had covered the girl's ears. Possibly the reason she had worn it in the first place.

"They both have one blue eye and one brown, though they are opposite. Her left eye is blue, his is brown," said Artemis. "Curious compeers, needless to say."

"Indeed."

Artemis opened a cabinet and pulled out a container full of cotton swabs. "I presume the girl is either inhuman or has been subjected to cosmetic surgery," he said. "DNA will tell."

"Swab the man too," said Butler. "I'm eager to see who he is."

Artemis knelt by the two individuals, pulling on a pair of latex gloves. He rinsed out their mouths as well as he could, catching the water in a refuse tray. He swabbed underneath their tongues to ensure the catchment of as much saliva as possible.

"The DNA requires a few hours to process," Artemis said, dropping the swabs into individual sterilized bags. "We should take their fingerprints as well."

Butler brought a plastic cube the size of a shoebox. Artemis scanned the sleeping man's hands.

The name_ Artemis Fowl_ flashed on the screen.

"Curious," said Artemis Fowl.

2. Chapter 2

Forget the lemur. The lemur was certainly worth millions. The two individuals in Fowl Manor were worth more.

The girl, for a start. She had begun to stir before the man, despite her lesser body weight. She certainly had an extremely high metabolism. Butler had to tranquilize her again before she regained consciousness.

Her species was a mystery. The DNA profile had come back inconclusive. She was related very closely to humans, though there were some obvious mutations in terms of height, among others. European in origin. Perhaps an isolated indigenous tribe somewhere had similar DNA markers as the girl.

The man's DNA markers were identical to Artemis's own.

Perhaps Artemis had contaminated the sample. He took DNA samples three times more, and all three times he came back with the same result. That by no means meant that they had the exact same genome; the chances of having identical markers was one billion to one. Highly unlikely, but possible.

Artemis was growing frustrated. He was certain that he was dealing with a pair of professional criminals, though his filters running through hacked Interpol, the Pentagon, CIA, and FBI came up devoid of promising results. He met Butler in the Ops room, where Butler was reviewing security footage.

"I don't care about the lemur anymore," Artemis said bluntly. "Let Kronski fend for himself in front of the Extinctionists."

"You were promised quite a generous sum of money."

"We may have uncovered a new species," Artemis insisted. "Discovery is more valuable than destruction. I also want to know how they were able to break into the house undetected. Such a skill is invaluable."

Butler was relieved. He had never liked the idea of bringing extinction to the silky sifaka. But his relief was undermined by the thought of holding two sentient creatures - at least one of which was human - hostage in Fowl Manor.

"Anything on the tapes?"

"Nothing, sir," Butler said.

"Keep looking, old friend. Surely you'll find something. They couldn't have just appeared from midair."

The hair on Butler's neck stood on end. _Old friend._ That's what the man in the costume had said. _Old friend._

* * *

><p>When Elder Artemis awoke, he was tied to a chair.<p>

The irony, he thought, and almost laughed. Artemis was certain he'd been involved in more kidnappings than an FBI hostage negotiator. Artemis looked up, moderately uncomfortable. Younger Artemis was standing before him. The interrogation had begun. Elder Artemis decided to get the first word in.

"Artemis Fowl," he said, hoping to unnerve the young one.

Younger Artemis smiled a sardonic grin. "I'm sorry, whose name are you saying? Yours or mine?"

"Both. One day you will be me, and I used to be you."

Young Artemis raised an eyebrow. "Are you talking about time travel?"

"Certainly."

"Let us save time. I find your maladroitness exhausting. You have no evidence you are me."

"Maladroitness. Interesting word choice. I take it you have a functional thesaurus at your disposal."

"You are a stranger who has broken into my home, and I have every right to rip your entrails out."

Elder Artemis didn't show his embarrassment, though it cut deep. Younger Artemis was terrible at interrogation. It would be a skill he would eventually hone, he knew, but seeing himself in the early phase was painful. Artemis had not realized how annoying he'd been. No wonder Holly had punched him as soon as she'd had the chance.

"If you kill me, you risk killing your future self," elder Artemis said.

"If I had built a time machine, I certainly wouldn't risk myself by testing it."

"It's hardly a risk," said Artemis. "We've been time traveling for years."

"We?"

"My friend and I," said Artemis. "A few others."

"Hm," said the younger boy. "I would be more inclined to believe this time-traveling blarney if you explained the technical details that make backward time travel possible."

"Time travel requires vast amounts of energy. Every single additional particle creates drag and makes materialization more difficult. Therefore it is most efficient to travel lightly, even if it is socially awkward."

"Those are hardly technical details of time travel."

"Elementary, really. Accelerate past the speed of light, using an

Alcubierre drive constructed with a quantized field between Casimir plates."

"Interesting," said the ten-year old, jotting down a note. "Since you know so much, what is Butler's first name?"

Elder Artemis was caught off guard. He hesitated.

The younger Artemis allowed the silence to grow uncomfortably long before he spoke again. "Prove to me that I can trust your story. Knowing Butler's name is perhaps the greatest piece of evidence in your story's favor."

Elder Artemis looked up. "I can't tell you..."

The younger boy's voice was steel. "Your friend's life hangs in the balance. I'm not afraid to kill her. Her corpse will make for fascinating dissection."

Elder Artemis stifled a gasp. He could see the truth in the younger boy's eyes. The boy was more ruthless, more emotionally distraught from his parents' decay. He was more willing to resort to violence to get what he wanted. The combination of intellect and cruelty made him unpredictable.

Artemis had two obvious options. One, divert the conversation. He could say something like, _So many violent tendencies. Where do they come from? Your insane mother or your crimelord father?_ No, he decided. Young Artemis might have been a budding criminal mastermind, but he was still ten years old.

"Svarog," he lied. The young one did not mince words. "I can tell you're lying. Your little friend is one step closer to the grave."

Artemis had been defeated. He knew it. "Domovoi."

The youth could see the truth in Artemis's eyes. Perhaps he had read Artemis's lips on the security footage. "When did you first hear that name?"

"When I was you, just now."

"A fascinating temporal quandary. If you found out because your future self told you, where did that fact originate?"

"A side effect of this new technology, I suppose."

"So you remember this conversation from the first time?"

"I assure you, Artemis, I have retained perfect memory well into my adulthood."

Younger Artemis pulled out a coin. "I am going to throw this in the air five times. Call the result in the air. If you are correct all five times, then I will concede your point about fate and time travel. If you are wrong even once, I will know you are bluffing. I never forget these gambles, and neither should you. If you are indeed me."

Artemis did not use expletives, but if he had been more liberal, he would have considered _D'Arvit _an appropriate word. Artemis's mind was racing. He had to come with a plan.

"Of course," elder Artemis said, drawing from a waning pool of self-assurance. "Heads."

Younger Artemis glared at him. "I said to call it in the air."

"But I already know it's heads. Afterward, it's tails, heads..."

"If you refuse to abide by my terms, you will meet Butler. He is not happy with you breaking into my house."

"I understand," Artemis said.

Younger Artemis tossed the coin, and elder Artemis called heads. Of course, he was only guessing. Each time Artemis guessed, he had a fifty percent chance of being correct. With five tosses, his chances were one in sixty-two of getting them all right, in order. Assuming the coin was fair.

When the coin came back down, younger Artemis sneered at him. "So much for perfect memory."

Elder Artemis wondered what could possibly have gone so wrong as to suffer such scathing remarks from a ten-year old.

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